

# ProComp

## Teacher Perspectives on Design, Usability and Impact

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Focus Group Findings, Implications &  
Recommendations

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# Executive Summary

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## Executive Summary

### Overview

During March 2015, the Denver Classroom Teachers Association (DCTA) and Denver Public School District Senior Administration (Admin) engaged third party consultant Mission Spark, LLC, to engage teachers and special service providers around their perspectives on and experiences with the District's compensation system, commonly known as ProComp. Senior representatives from each organization worked collaboratively to identify critical topics to explore based on past engagement efforts, to select schools for participation, and to group teachers and special service providers (SSPs) for focus groups. In addition, the Mission Spark team conducted 11 interviews with primary stakeholders involved in the design and evaluation of the ProComp system to promote continuity between evaluative and engagement efforts.

### Methods and Reporting

From April to June 2015, 300 teacher/SSP voices were heard—293 in person (through 14 in-person focus groups (86) and 15 school-based discussions (203), and one on-line forum (7)) for a total of 300 participants. Participants engaged in nuanced and thoughtful discussions, providing actionable ideas, insights, stories and experiences.

In June 2015, Mission Spark presented initial findings (including findings general to the majority of teachers engaged, as well as more nuanced findings based on teacher grouping) to the project team to determine any additional engagement methods to inform this report. No additional methods were identified at that time. In October 2015, Mission Spark presented an overview of this effort, plus initial findings, to bargaining teams for both DCTA and Admin.

This final report, geared at an internal (not public) audience, provides more detailed insight into participant perspectives, implications of those insights, shares teacher-generated ideas for improving ProComp, and finishes with recommendations for both further exploration and considerations for the renegotiation of ProComp 3.0.

### Summary of Findings

The large number of participants, diverse populations engaged, variety of methods used, and consistency in findings from past research and evaluation efforts, provides Mission Spark with a high degree of confidence in the reliability and validity of the insights presented. That said, focus group analysis is not quantitative in nature, and further exploration of results where perspectives vary and/ or are critical for decision-making should be explored through additional methods and

sources. For the purposes of this executive summary, 24 insights are highlighted, with brief explanatory statements provided. These insights represent perspectives from a majority of teachers engaged. More detailed and nuanced information and supporting statements can be found in the findings section of the report.

Teachers report that ProComp is complicated to understand in its current form and support to users is inadequate.

All participants found ProComp complicated to understand. In particular, miscellaneous lines on paychecks and formulas behind final calculations made it hard for teachers to understand and track their incentives. They also reported there is not adequate support to orient, explain or assist users of the system at the school or district level.

Mission Spark facilitators observed teachers express less empathy and more competitiveness when redistribution of ProComp resources was potentially at stake.

Many teachers staunchly defended individual and school-based incentives they currently earn and expressed frustration that other types of school environments or types of teachers should or could, in the future, have access to a greater piece of the ProComp pie, eliminating or diminishing the size of their own incentives.

ProComp is perceived by many as a repackaging of salary, not as bonus system.

Many teachers shared that they perceive ProComp as a way to repack their salary and give it back to them, but with more work and strings attached.

Residual impacts of 2008 ProComp redesign (2.0) are salient for veteran teachers.

Most veteran teachers are angry about the changes to ProComp between 2005 and 2008; for those who voted to implement the system, they felt their voices had been undermined.

Base-building opportunities are of critical importance to all teachers.

All participants were concerned about the 14 year cap on base-building eligible incentives, and the level of base-building in general. Often newer teachers were unaware there was a cap.

Teachers appear to place high value on system predictability.

Teachers need to know both exactly how they can earn compensation through the system and that the calculations behind the system won't change year to year, once they've made decisions that are optimal for them related to ProComp incentives. Financial planning was a primary reason cited.

Teachers are seeking increased transparency around ProComp.

Participants appeared to speak with one voice around wanting to receive transparent information about how ProComp works for individuals, groupings of teachers, by school, and for the system overall, as compared to a baseline and to other district compensation packages.

Participants are supportive of determining and rewarding teacher effectiveness, but express significant concerns about how to measure fairly.

All participants wanted to grow, develop, improve and be effective in their work. Measuring, supporting, and valuing teacher effectiveness is important to the vast majority of teacher participants, though all acknowledged it was very difficult to measure effectiveness in a universally fair and consistent manner.

The majority of participating teachers reported LEAP should not be tied to compensation at this time.

For a variety of reasons, ranging from concerns about perceived variability in scoring to lack of transparency to preferred use of LEAP as a growth model, almost all teachers determined LEAP should not be the measure of effectiveness tied to ProComp. Areas that teachers were most comfortable in exploring LEAP connections to compensation in the future were around bonuses for distinguished teachers and in rewarding teacher growth as documented through LEAP.

ProComp payout structure matters to teachers.

Pay check stubs with miscellaneous line item impacts financial understanding and goals of teachers; and there are higher tax burdens with the payment structure.

Teachers appear to become jaded over time about ProComp.

Participants who came on board in 2005 or later when ProComp was in effect and were excited about the possibilities of ProComp, are mainly frustrated with the complexity of the system, base-building caps, and the fact that some incentives are not accessible to be earned by all teachers but restricted to certain categories of teachers.

Teachers support hard-to-serve school incentives and believe amount of incentive should be increased.

A majority of participating teachers agreed that hard-to-serve schools should receive additional monies for teaching in these environments, and that those incentives should both be larger than 2.0 amounts and reward tenure at a school. Support of additional resources going to these teachers was expressed, in particular, when not in the context of losing a portion of one's own ProComp incentives as a result.

Mixed opinions exist on the impact of school bonuses vs. individual bonuses.

Participants expressed mixed views on how school vs. individual bonuses impacted teacher behavior and school culture, and whether teachers prefer all individual-based bonuses, all school-based bonuses, or a combination of the two. There were different implications based on teacher grouping—for example, participants from red schools often expressed individual bonuses as being more effective for their environments.

Teachers report that a teacher/SSP's compensation should not decrease as a result of a redesign of ProComp.

While the majority of participants supported additional monies for hard-to-serve schools, strong opinions were exerted that teachers who have been playing by the rules of the old system should not receive decreased compensation under new rules.

Teachers report that an incentive motivates and is experienced differently than a bonus, and should be separated.

Participants expressed that the structure and language describing ProComp compensation focus areas (knowledge and skills, market incentives, student growth, and comprehensive professional evaluation) should clearly delineate incentives from bonuses.

Participants highlighted what was important to them in a compensation system (principles below are not listed in any particular order):

- Achieve simplicity and clarity in the system.
- Provide predictability through clear paths to earnings, as well as provide prompt pay out of incentives.
- Provide equal opportunity to pursue incentives for everyone in system—they can choose to put in the work or not.
- Build in teacher control of compensation destiny—there are clear steps and choices that teachers can make in the system that fall within the participant's influence.
- Achieve consistency in underlying calculations, instead of shifts and changes.
- Provide transparency of how the system impacts compensation (at individual, teacher grouping, school and district levels).
- Make reasonable cost of living adjustments, especially to address rising costs of housing.
- Provide base-building opportunities throughout one's career, whether through career pathways or modified step and lane.
- Connect ProComp objectives and outcomes through theory and evidence to DPS's mission to provide all students the opportunity to achieve the knowledge and skills necessary to become contributing citizens in society.
- Promote understanding of the value of the compensation package as a whole, not just as it relates to ProComp.
- Provide meaningful ways to appreciate, celebrate and champion teachers.

Participants want an agreement to be reached and appreciate that tax payers invested in teacher compensation.

Participants want to keep the money as a vital part of compensation. The flip side of this is they do not want that money to be used to repackage their baseline salary.

Career progression matters to participants, in the classroom and throughout career.

There was openness to the way this is achieved as long as the system is fair, clear and base-building.

Continuing education and growth as a teacher is a core value for participants.

Almost 100% of participants supported continuing to recognize, through compensation, the achievement of advanced degrees (including loan payoff) and to incentivize ongoing professional development. This was expressed as a core value—as educators, the system should value continuing education.

Testing may present a perverse outcome in ProComp.

For the incentives that are calculated in part on student test scores, a portion of teachers identified that sometimes they or others can end up resenting their students for bringing down the scores of a class or a school's rating.

Teachers reported that the ProComp bonus structure is not as meaningful or effective as it could be.

Payout timings do not reinforce when the incentive was earned, disconnecting the effort from the receipt of the money. Most participating teachers report that the amount of work for the size of the bonus is mismatched for both Professional Development Units (PDUs) and Student Learning Objectives (SLOs), and that both of these areas can be manipulated to receive the bonus. Participants from high performing and/or high growth reported that teaching at schools which consistently receive both high growth and high performance expect it as salary.

Teachers appear to feel sandwiched between competing pressures, which serves to devalue their current compensation.

Participants reported that the additional and less enjoyable time spent on activities that teachers perceive as not providing a direct benefit to students or themselves diminishes the value of existing compensation, and demotivates the workforce.

Participants have lost some faith/trust in both the District and DCTA through the ProComp process.

Participants reported that the communication between sides had become more about winning, than on what was best for students and the teachers who serve them. They are looking for clear, transparent communications that keep the mission and values of the DPS salient. Participants, in general, were no longer assuming “best intentions.”

The vast majority of participants were ok with differentiated pay, as long as the factors determining pay were perceived as fair and access to the incentives equitable.

A small subset of participants expressed that all teachers are doing their best and should receive equal pay. The majority supported differentiated pay, but expressed concerns around areas



perceived to be unfair—including subjective evaluations, base-building limitations, shifting ProComp calculations, access by all teachers to available individual incentives and the structure of school-based incentives.

## Conclusion

Detailed implications, teacher-generated ideas, and Mission Spark recommendations can be found in the full report. Mission Spark’s summary conclusions regarding implications of these findings, as well as reviews of other evaluative efforts, are the following:

- (1) Structural barriers exist to realizing the potential and measuring the effectiveness of ProComp in compensating and motivating teachers. ProComp is a single, complex and under-supported part of a much larger puzzle that feeds into teacher motivation and effectiveness.
- (2) Establishing a unified strategic plan to support, motivate and compensate teachers through the lens of DPS’s mission, vision and values could be an important step in clarifying the intent and desired outcomes of ProComp. Also unpacking the interactions of multiple and changing systems (i.e., SLOs, LEAP, Differentiated Roles) in influencing intended ProComp compensation, effectiveness and retention outcomes is also important to understanding the system.
- (3) The research and teacher engagement strategies to-date does not accurately capture trade-offs teachers experience between design principles, incentives and other structural elements—or how elements of ProComp compare to other areas of value for teachers like leadership, culture, teaching teams, health benefits, retirement and time off. This is problematic because ProComp represents a finite pool of money, so a re-design will likely lead to winners and losers in some form—what are teachers willing to trade off? This should be explored carefully and more fully.
- (4) Keeping teacher feedback, ideas and valued design principles salient to ProComp negotiations and any system redesign, and then communicating how those ideas were taken into account, will help teachers see how their voices were heard and why tradeoffs were made. Small efforts in communication and transparency could go a long way to teachers feeling heard and part of any re-design.
- (5) Showing and communicating good faith effort to solve the most pressing issues teachers have brought forth—including areas like system complexity and support, measures of effectiveness, base-building and feeling valued throughout ones career, whether through ProComp or other means, along with increasing transparency around the system, communicating through the lens of the mission and vision, and establishing a culture where teachers are as collaborative partners, will help restore teacher trust and buy-in.

# Section I. Introduction, Process & Methods

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## Introduction

This report summarizes insights on the ProComp system shared by 300 Denver Public School System teachers and special service providers through 14 focus groups, 15 school-based discussions and an online forum. The purpose of this effort is to document the voices of those for who the system was designed, to explore the implications of the findings, and to share recommendations that could inform the next negotiated version of ProComp.

The report is structured in the following way:

- Section One provides background on ProComp, an overview of process and methods for this effort, and limitations;
- Section Two summarizes critical findings, explores revised guiding principles for future versions of ProComp, and presents a decision-making tool for negotiators to consider that captures those principles and elements most important to teachers;
- Section Three explores bright ideas from teachers and unintended consequences of system design;
- Section Four offers Mission Spark's concluding thoughts and possible paths forward in data collection and analysis, and redesign efforts;
- Appendices to this report are collected in a separate Drop Box folder include all tools, supporting reports, materials, summaries, and design process documentation relevant to this effort.

## About ProComp

The following language represents how ProComp was presented to participants in the engagement process, and draws from existing, DCTA/ Admin approved language about the system.

### The Original ProComp

The Denver Public School District compensation system for teachers and special services providers, titled ProComp, was designed and piloted over a seven year period, launching District-wide in 2005. It was approved by a vote of DCTA members, funded by a voter-approved \$25 million tax increase, and its development was supported by a number of community organizations and foundations. ProComp was created to attract and retain great teachers, particularly in Hard-to-Serve schools and high-needs subject areas, and to provide teachers with meaningful rewards for their real contributions to student growth. The approved mill levy language follows as a directive for ProComp.

## Mill Levy Language

*Denver Public Schools (School District No. 1) taxes shall be increased \$25 million per year, adjusted for inflation, solely and exclusively to fund the professional compensation system for teachers (ProComp), which tax increase shall terminate if ProComp terminates, including compensation to teachers for:*

- *Teaching in hard to staff schools*
- *Teaching in hard to fill positions such as math, science, and special education*
- *Increasing teaching knowledge and teaching skills by successfully completing ProComp approved advanced degrees, professional teaching standards licenses and additional training to improve classroom skills*
- *Positive evaluations of teaching performance*
- *Meeting or exceeding objectives for student learning*
- *Achieving distinguished school status*

## ProComp 2.0

In 2008, the ProComp system was significantly changed, increasing incentives for driving student achievement and serving in high needs schools and hard-to-staff assignments. Changes also included limitations to the amount of ProComp-related increases to base salary (base-building) which could be earned by teachers after their 14th year of service. ProComp continued to incorporate four focus areas that inform the overall compensation levels of teachers: student growth, market incentives, knowledge and skills development, and professional evaluation.

## ProComp 3.0: What's Next?

In 2014, in anticipation of renewal and renegotiation of the ProComp Agreement (3.0), DPS and DCTA agreed to identify a design team of teachers and school / central office leaders to explore possible approaches to strengthen compensation, career pathways and related structures in the District. The Design Team met nine times, examining the impact of ProComp, and exploring alternate designs for compensation and career pathways of other school Districts and professions. Based on the results of the design team, DCTA leaders and DPS administrators determined additional insight into ProComp design and impact from teachers was needed. Through funding provided by Rose Community Foundation, the team engaged an external consultancy, Mission Spark, to engage teachers around their perceptions of effectiveness, usability and comprehension of the current system as a means to further inform shifts in design for 3.0. This effort built on the work of past of evaluations, and the Design Team's efforts—specifically by exploring teacher reaction's to the set of proposed design principles.

## Teacher Engagement Design Process

The design process is relevant to this report in several critical ways: (1) that high level representation from both DCTA and Admin (the team) were at the table engaged in joint decision-making around the schools engaged, voices sought, topics explored, and engagement approaches; (2) that the funder, Rose Community Foundation, supported the outcomes and process of the team, and was not involved in determining focus of the work; and (3) that the core

team developed shared goals, values and priorities for the work at the outset. This continued an important process of collaboration that had been key to the development of ProComp at its outset, and built trust in both the process and the results.

Mission Spark and the team met multiple times before, during and after the engagement process was complete, documenting all meetings and using a shared, transparent space (BaseCamp) for documenting final tools, decisions, and notes. Individual sessions were held with each side and joint sessions focused on setting the intention of the work, determining who to engage and how, homing in on topics to explore, and how to best incentivize participation in the opportunities. Any time Mission Spark met individually with DCTA or Admin, an equal opportunity for such a meeting was provided to the other side to keep opportunities balanced throughout the process.

### Shared Goals

The Admin and DCTA team, through a facilitated process by Mission Spark, set the following intentions for this work:

- 1) Gather authentic feedback and participation by teachers that doesn't feel like bargaining; there should be openness and trust;
- 2) Achieve valid representation of teacher voices and resulting data;
- 3) Balance the tension and trade-offs between urgency of completing the work and quality of engagement;
- 4) Gather feedback on teacher/ SSP ideas, and specifics of ProComp; and
- 5) Wherever possible, capture tradeoffs relatively related to ProComp's current design and the values underpinning the system.

The focus of the work was determined not to be about choosing between compensation models or choosing between sides. It was also determined that wherever possible, the new work should connect to efforts previously made to evaluate ProComp and engage teachers.

### Methods, Participation and Limitations

Mission Spark engaged teachers and special providers through 29 in-person structured feedback opportunities, including 14 in person, 1.5 hour focus groups and 15 one hour school-based discussions. These sessions took place over a six week period from the end of April to early June 2015. Mission Spark supplemented these efforts with 11 interviews with primary stakeholders involved in the design and evaluation of the ProComp system.

293 teachers participated in in-person feedback opportunities, with an additional seven participating through an online mechanism. Inquiry goals and themes for exploration included learning from teachers/ SSPs about:

- Primary concerns and interests related to ProComp;
- General perceptions of ProComp;
- Perceived fairness of the ProComp system;
- Circumstances, if any, some teachers should receive more incentives through the system;
- Factors which motivate participants in their work, and where ProComp fits in;
- Primary compensation goals and how ProComp could support;
- Ways ProComp is effective from participant perspectives;
- Views on ProComp's connection to teacher effectiveness and connecting to LEAP; and
- Tradeoffs between outcomes-based and knowledge/skills rewards in ProComp.

### Voices Heard

The following list represents the voices sought out and engaged through this process, in an effort to determine how the ProComp system is working for a variety of teachers.

New Teachers (1-3 years)	Special Education Teachers/Mild
Mid-Career Teachers (4-9)	Moderate/Center Programs
Experienced teachers (10+ years)	Peer Observers
Teachers in Different Categories of Leap	Teachers from Highest Need Schools
Early Childhood Educators and kindergarten through first grade	Teachers for Title I Schools
Teachers in High Growth Schools	Teachers in Transition
Teacher Leaders	Teachers in Innovative Schools
Specialized Service Providers	Teachers in High Performing Schools
ELA Teachers	Teachers in Nontraditional Models
	Teachers without testing

### Focus Groups

The majority of the 11/14 in-person focus groups took place at Manual High School, as a neutral, central location with ample parking. 3/14 focus groups took place at the Emily Griffith Campus, due to the early June time frame. Manual was no longer available for sessions scheduled the last week of school. Focus groups were professionally facilitated, food was provided and each participant received a \$20 gift card of the participant's choice. 86 individuals participated in an in-person focus group, and 9 participated online. Focus groups tended to be smaller in size and conversations more rich and detailed. A more detailed picture of engagement strategies and groupings can be found in the appendices in the Engagement Strategy Document.

The pool of teachers from which each focus group was drawn was developed by District team members from HR Talent Management, and excluded any teachers/SSP that had opportunity to participate in a school-based discussion. Almost 100% of remaining teachers received an invite to

attend a focus group. 137 registered to participate in-person vs. 86 who actually attended, demonstrating a 37% attrition rate.

### School Visits

Sixteen schools (representing different grade levels, parts of the District, demographics, ratings, leadership environments, and educational models) were identified and approached. Of the 16 schools approached, 15 chose to participate by providing and promoting an opportunity for all teachers (whether on ProComp or not) to attend and participate in the session. Those who were interested but could not attend were given the option of participating online via a survey mechanism. Four of the fifteen schools used a small group discussion format due to the large number of participants and the capability of the room provided. Those findings are taken into account here, and also detailed in a separate report which allows for those notes to be provided verbatim. Participants in small group formats received \$5 gift cards to Starbucks. Participants in large group formats received \$10 gift cards of their choice.

School	# of Participants
Denison	5
Hill	30
North	6
Asbury	17
East	30
Stephen Knight Early Education	4
McGlone	9
Gust	8
Trevista	13
Colfax	6
Math & Science Leadership Academy	14
Thomas Jefferson	14
Skinner	11
Grant	30
Bruce Randolph	10
TOTAL	207

### Other Data Sources

Mission Spark's focus was on primary data collection through direct stakeholder engagement. Mission Spark conducted 11 interviews with individuals involved in the design or evaluation of ProComp. In addition, Mission Spark consultants reviewed a variety of secondary sources to inform the process design and to provide context for findings, including articles and press coverage of ProComp, ProComp evaluation reports, the ProComp website and handbook, among others.

## Limitations

In general, the objective of Focus Group research is to generate qualitative and not quantitative data. Therefore, while we try and obtain the best and most representative sample possible, it is not absolutely necessary in order to gather useful information, and one does not need statistical accuracy to gather extremely useful information in this context. That said, there were some limitations to methods, including:

- This project was designed and executed in a short period of time. Focus groups and school-based discussions took place at the end of the school year, limiting the ability of more teachers to participate.
- Some voices may have come through more loudly than are representative of their percentage in the teacher population as a whole. Over 5000 teachers received an invitation to participate, of which 293 participated in-person, representing close to 6% of teachers. For example, a larger number of Special Service Providers (SSPs) participated in the focus groups compared to the number off SSPs as a percentage of the total teacher population. This is both useful and challenging—this means groupings where the system may not be working well for them have an opportunity to voice important information, at the same time it may not be representative of the majority of ProComp voices. Mission Spark tried to neutralize this somewhat by drawing out findings that were heard “loud and clear” by almost all participants, vs. those attributed to subgroups of participants.
- Respondents can feel peer pressure to give similar answers to one another to the moderator's questions. Mission Spark tried to combat this by making sure each participant was provided with an individual question sheet, along with an invitation to complete, should they not have ample opportunity to share their views and/or they did not feel comfortable sharing a particular perspective in front of their peers. 24 sheets were returned with comments.
- The moderator's skill in phrasing questions along with the setting can affect responses and skew results. Mission Spark operated from a script and a set of probes. However, each focus group and school discussion had some level of variability in flow and phrasing that may have influenced findings.

The best way to overcome limitations in study design is to compare results to other findings elicited through other methods, and to explore focus group findings through alternate methods. Mission Spark has flagged some areas for further exploration, and also completed a synthesis report separate to this one which draws out similarities and differences in findings across major ProComp evaluative efforts.

# Section II. Findings, Principles & Decision-Making Tool

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## Critical Findings and Supporting Details

While it is difficult to apply an exact number of teachers who shared a particular view, there certainly was a definitive sense of levels of agreements by participants, due to the large number of groupings (30 total) and diverse participants (300). Nuance is fleshed out where possible, and representative comments are shared.

**Finding 1.** Teachers report that ProComp is complicated to understand in its current form and support to users is inadequate. All participants found ProComp complicated to understand. In particular, miscellaneous lines on paychecks and formulas behind final calculations made it hard for teachers to understand and track their incentives. They also reported there is not adequate support to orient, explain or assist users of the system at the school or district level.

### *Range of Illustrative Quotes/ Phrases*

- “ProComp could be more transparent and/or simplified.”
- “I find ProComp very confusing and always have!!”
- “I am too confused by the whole system”
- “No one knows anything about ProComp”
- “If I ask about ProComp at school, they tell me to call the District. If I call the District, they tell me to ask at my school.”
- “Simplicity – no one knows what their base is.”
- “They need to go back to have a ProComp representative at every school”
- “Very confusing; there doesn’t seem to be anyone in the district/school building that can explain it well and how it applies to you specifically.”

**Finding 2.** Mission Spark facilitators observed teachers express less empathy and more competitiveness when redistribution of ProComp resources was potentially at stake.

Many teachers staunchly defended individual and school-based incentives they currently earn and expressed frustration that other types of school environments or types of teachers should or could, in the future, have access to a greater piece of the ProComp pie, eliminating or diminishing the size of their own incentives. Many teachers didn’t understand the different environments across the District and how that impacted ability to teach—unless they had taught in a variety of environments. A common theme expressed by participants is that each teacher works extremely hard for their money.



#### *Range of Illustrative Quotes/ Phrases*

- “Teachers at green and blue schools work just as hard. We just face different challenges—like demanding parents.”
- “We shouldn’t be punished by having our money taken away to be given to red schools.”
- “Affluent schools have the kids, the community support, the resources... Of course they’re high performing.”
- “If teachers at green schools think they work as hard as us, they have no idea what they are talking about.”
- “I’ve worked at high performing and high needs schools. High needs definitely is harder.”

#### **Finding 3. ProComp is perceived by many as a repackaging of salary, not as a bonus system.**

Teachers shared that they perceive ProComp as a way to repackage their salary and give it back to them, but with more work and strings attached. The implication is that it does not serve as a bonus system as much as a way to recover an average salary for teaching. For those receiving school-based incentives, like high performing and high growth, the perception of ProComp as salary is especially strong.

#### *Range of Illustrative Quotes/ Phrases*

- “ProComp is just my salary repackaged and given back to me for more work.”
- “I’ve earned this money. I see it as part of my salary.”
- “I would feel differently about ProComp if base salary was more competitive with other districts, and ProComp was in addition.”

#### **Finding 4. Residual impacts of 2008 ProComp redesign (2.0) are salient for veteran teachers.**

Most participants who were experienced teachers expressed anger about the changes to ProComp between 2005 and 2008. For those who voted to implement the system, they felt their voices had been undermined and that trust with the District was low as a result.

#### *Range of Illustrative Quotes/ Phrases*

- “[ProComp] is a wolf in sheep’s clothing. Not what we were promised in 2004. We were sold lifetime unlimited earnings potential, which is a farce.”
- “Sold a bill of goods.”
- “I’m still bitter about 2008.”

#### **Finding 5. Base-building opportunities are of critical importance.**

All participants were concerned about the 14 year cap on base-building eligible incentives, and the level of base-building in general. Teachers—experienced, mid-level and new, expressed concern about capping base-building opportunities signaled about the value the District places on experienced teachers; as well as the impact on teacher’s retirement, compensation trajectory and motivation.

#### *Range of Illustrative Quotes/ Phrases*

- “Base building only way to facilitate retirement goals and substantial compensation increase.”
- “Ending base-building after year 14 sends a message that experienced teachers aren’t valued.”
- “Base-building opportunities need to be increased and of greater value.”
- “Everyone should have opportunity to increase salary beyond yearly bonuses – past year 14.”
- Base-building incentives should include rewarding effectiveness and knowledge building through PDU—the system must be simple. The rewards must be worth the time and effort to obtain.”
- “If I could only change one thing, it would be no cap on base-building.”

**Finding 6.** Participants appeared to place high value on system predictability. Teachers need to know exactly how they can earn compensation through the system, and that the qualifications for earning a bonus won’t change from year to year. Financial planning was primary reason cited. This does not mean everyone will choose to or will be successful in earning an incentive or bonus, but the rules of the game need to be clear and unchanging.

#### *Range of Illustrative Quotes/ Phrases*

- “PDUs and Advanced degrees are easier to control. I know I can earn my PDU bonus easily; outcomes are dependent on my students, who are more difficult to “control.”
- “My big concern is with possible fluctuation of salary from year to year, based on random assignments out of my control (as an SSP).”
- “My mortgage company would not accept ProComp earnings towards my mortgage.”
- “I am not going to get that incentive this year, because the calculation changed.”

**Finding 7.** Increased transparency is needed around ProComp. Teachers spoke with one voice around wanting to better understand how ProComp works for individuals, groupings of teachers, by school, and for the system overall, as compared to a baseline and to other district compensation packages. The lack of transparency around the system leads some teacher to believe cost-cutting efforts are behind ProComp.

#### *Range of Illustrative Quotes/ Phrases*

- “Why aren’t they more transparent about how ProComp is working?”
- “Are they saving money with ProComp?”
- “I want to understand how ProComp is working compared to other districts and models.”
- “We need to receive data that informs decision-making in a timely fashion.”
- “DPS = shifting sands, and not transparent.”

**Finding 8.** Participants are generally supportive of determining teacher effectiveness but have concerns about how to measure it. All teachers wanted to grow, develop, improve and be effective in their work. Measuring and supporting teacher effectiveness is important to the vast majority of teacher participants, though all acknowledged it was very difficult to measure effectiveness in a universally fair and consistent manner. They support weeding out ineffective teachers, and growing and developing teachers to be increasingly effective. They perceive LEAP as having been built with sound principles and that it is a good model to support teacher growth and dismissal for ineffectiveness. They focused more on LEAP than on the CPE structure currently tied to ProComp in their comments.

*Range of Illustrative Quotes/ Phrases*

- “Measuring teacher effectiveness is important.”
- “We must attract and retain the best.”
- “Teacher effectiveness should be the only measure.”
- “I am worried about how to fairly measure teacher effectiveness.”
- “Measuring teacher effectiveness is not one size fits all, better to focus on teacher growth.”
- “If staff are leaving or not performing, what does that say about leadership? It seems reasonable [to ask], especially since if students are not performing, we ask about the teachers.”
- “I am ok with rewarding effectiveness if we also reward hard work—going above and beyond to take on extra tasks, as well as unfunded mandates like ELA.”

**Finding 9.** Participating teachers reported LEAP should not be tied to compensation at this time. For a variety of reasons, ranging from variability in scoring to lack of transparency to preferred use of LEAP as a growth model, almost all teachers determined LEAP should not be the measure of effectiveness tied to ProComp. Teachers report a high level of variation in feedback, scoring and relationships with peer observers and principals. Teachers report the need for greater transparency in the system (from pilot to implementation). Because LEAP is still changing almost all teachers determined LEAP should not be the measure of effectiveness tied to ProComp at this time. Some teachers expressed that they thought tying LEAP to money will shift teachers’ focus away from growth and innovation, and move the emphasis to maximizing compensation and seeking system perfection.

Teachers are most open to providing an extra bonus to those who receive distinguished ratings in LEAP and to use LEAP to determine and reward growth in effectiveness; i.e. growth in student achievement is valued in the system, growth in teacher effectiveness should/could be rewarded.

- I. Hard-to-Serve school teachers reported that LEAP peer observers unfairly punished them in scoring due to the environments in which they teach—that the rubric isn’t appropriate for their classrooms in the same way it may be elsewhere.

2. For different types of teachers (ECE, Special Education, Center Teachers and Special Service Providers), LEAP doesn't apply as well, is often more subjective and relies on fewer data sources.

*Range of Illustrative Quotes/ Phrases*

- "ProComp should not be tied to LEAP"
- "Yes, HOWEVER, while I believe I should be compensated for effective evaluations, my concerns are that the evaluation system isn't fair (hard to serve school teachers may never get effective ratings) \* some measurement that recognizes with LEAP and other ways of allowing for "effectiveness""
- "If LEAP were totally vetted and proven reliable and consistent then we would be more likely to trust tying it to ProComp."
- "Distinguished teachers make up less than 4% of teachers. They should get a bonus."
- "Money + subjective opinion = unfair"
- "ProComp should not be connected to LEAP at all. LEAP should be used strictly to help teachers grow in their practices... There are simply too many variations of methodology and need, for it to be used as an evaluative tool tied to pay... It is helpful for challenging, stretching and growing as a teacher, as well as providing a unified platform from which to begin looking at what is happening in the classroom."
- "It works (to tie ProComp to LEAP) in that it is a good idea to hold teachers accountable, and to provide examples of expected behaviors. It does not work, because using the same framework for all teachers in all schools is biased."
- "LEAP should be used as a coaching tool, not as an evaluative tool for salary. Areas of growth could be identified and each teacher could be expected to show improvement in those areas in the next year."
- "The connection between LEAP and ProComp is conflict of interest because the district has an incentive to score us lower to save money."
- "LEAP doesn't work well in red schools."

**Finding 10.** ProComp payout structure matters to teachers. Pay check stubs with miscellaneous line item impacts financial goals of teachers. For example, mortgage companies will not take ProComp one-time bonuses into account when qualifying teachers for mortgages. In addition, it is difficult to parse out whether an incentive has been received or a mistake has been made. Finally, in paying the compensation as a bonus instead of as part of a salary, the tax implications are greater.

*Range of Illustrative Quotes/ Phrases*

- "I have no idea what my paycheck means."
- "What is in the miscellaneous line on my pay check?"

- “I got confused on my advanced degree paperwork and missed out on several months of increased pay.”
- “I could not get a mortgage based on my ProComp income because it was a bonus.”
- “It’s not fair that I earned a school-based incentive in the previous year that was paid out the following year, but since I moved I didn’t get it.”
- “Bonuses taxed at higher rate.”
- “It took me two years to figure out I wasn’t getting base building.”

**Finding 11. Teachers appear to become jaded over time about ProComp.** Teachers who came on board in 2005 or later when ProComp was in effect and were excited about the possibilities of ProComp, are mainly frustrated with the complexity of the system, base-building caps, and the fact the some incentives are not accessible to be earned by all (for example, paying more for a teacher/SSP who chooses to teach at a Hard-to-Serve school is acceptable, but incentives available only to testing-teachers for student outcomes, when many roles aren’t eligible for this incentive but contribute to student outcomes, is not as acceptable.)

*Range of Illustrative Quotes/ Phrases*

- “I was excited about ProComp potential, but too many things change.”
- “ProComp doesn’t mean much compared to school environment and leadership.”
- “My experience doesn’t feel valued.”
- “SLOs and PDUs are too much work for the amount of the incentive.”

**Finding 12. Participating teachers support hard-to-serve school incentives and believe amount of incentive should be increased.** A majority of teachers agreed that hard-to-serve schools should receive additional monies for teaching in these environments, and that those incentives should likely be larger, and reward tenure at a school. Participants noted that the current incentive (and perhaps any incentive) could not make up for some of the environments and cultures in hard-to-serve schools—leadership, community, turnover and teacher teams mattered much more to workplace satisfaction and happiness than financial gain. What it takes to attract a teacher may be very different than what it takes to retain a teacher in this environment.

*Range of Illustrative Quotes/ Phrases*

- “I appreciate the support for working at a high needs school.”
- “High needs for \$2,500? Not enough!”
- “We should offer double compensation for distinguished/effective teachers who are willing to move to an orange or red school.”
- “Effective and distinguished teachers leave hard to serve school because of admin not students.”
- “The money isn’t going to keep a teacher at a hard to serve school – they need more support, more staffing, more intervention supports.”

**Finding 13.** Mixed opinions exist on the impact of school bonuses vs individual bonuses.

Participants expressed mixed views on how school vs. individual bonuses impacted teacher behavior and school culture, and whether teachers prefer all individual-based bonuses, all school-based bonuses, or a combination of the two.

1. A subset of teachers indicated that teachers on the cusp of achieving one of these ratings work harder together to bump into a high performing or high growth category.
2. Others noted it was possible for less effective and less hard-working teachers to "ride-the-coat tails" of others.
3. Some noted that it acts as a perverse incentive—teachers want to get into high growth and high performing schools to automatically be able to opt into higher earning potential.
4. Many teachers at high needs schools were more of the opinion that all teachers should be compensated individually, based on factors within their control and choice, and that were fairly judged for the environments in which they operated.
5. Special Service Providers and Special Ed teachers noted that they often get assigned to schools so it eliminates the ability to choose as it relates to the likeliness of receiving a school-wide incentive.

*Range of Illustrative Quotes/ Phrases*

- "What if I work hard and achieve high growth, but my whole school doesn't. I can't earn that incentive."
- "You may get a bonus just because of the building you are in."
- "If a whole school makes awesome progress with their students, and the District wants to reward that progress, then give a bonus to every teacher in that school for that year."
- "The district should just give the ProComp money directly to the school, and the teachers and principal can determine how to best spend it to promote their goals."

**Finding 14.** Participants felt a teacher/SSP's compensation should not decrease as a result of a redesign of ProComp. While the majority of participants supported additional monies for hard-to-serve schools, strong opinions were exerted that teachers who have been playing by the rules of the old system should not receive decreased compensation under new rules. This was especially relevant for school-based incentives. These incentives are most viewed as "salary-like" in stable schools.

*Range of Illustrative Quotes/ Phrases*

- "Only offering incentives for hard to serve schools is inequitable, too. All teachers work hard and are over worked, over meeting-ed, over extended, over testing, etc. with not enough planning time."
- "Incentives for any teachers should not be at the expense of others – e.g. hard to serve at 30% of schools should not be because other teachers lose bonuses."
- "We think it's valuable to incentivize positions at hard to serve schools but the amount needs to be generous and not at the expense of other teachers' pay."

- “Why would a District want teachers to make less than the year before?”

**Finding 15.** Participants report that an incentive motivates and is experienced differently than a bonus, and incentives should be separated from bonuses in the ProComp structure. Participants expressed that the structure and language describing ProComp compensation focus areas (knowledge and skills, market incentives, student growth, and comprehensive professional evaluation) should clearly delineate incentives from bonuses.

- For example, “Exceeds Expectations” offers significant compensation, yet is only eligible for those teachers who administer the Colorado State Assessment (CSA). The language presents it as a “bonus” for outcomes, yet most teachers in earlier grades feel they have supported the growth of that student to be able to perform well on testing. A common argument used to support this lack of accessibility to other teachers is that teaching a testing subject requires more work and that there is a hard-to-teach element—however, that acts as an incentive for teachers to teach one of these subjects, and confuses bonus with incentive.
- The language under “market incentives” states that a ProComp teacher earns a “bonus” for working in a high needs school, and under “student growth” that under Student Growth a ProComp teachers earns a “bonus” for working in a high performing school. More differentiation of intended outcome is needed.

*Range of Illustrative Quotes:*

- “The system is muddy.”
- “Bonuses and incentives should be treated differently and mean different things to teachers.”
- “Bonuses and incentives are different things. One should not go masquerading as the other.”
- “Why should testing teachers get money for outcomes in students we all helped contribute to in getting a child grade-ready?”

**Finding 16.** Participants highlighted what was important to them in a compensation system, listed below in no particular order:

1. Simplicity and clarity of the system;
2. Predictability of earnings and prompt pay out of incentives (when they are earned);
3. Equal opportunity to pursue incentives for everyone in system—they can choose to put in the work or not;
4. Control of compensation destiny—there are clear steps and choices that teachers can make in the system that fall within the participant’s influence;
5. Consistency in underlying calculations, instead of shifts and changes;
6. Transparency of how the system impacts compensation (at individual, teacher grouping, school and district levels);
7. Reasonable cost of living adjustments, especially to address rising costs of housing;

8. Base-building opportunities and progression throughout one's career;
9. Connection to and impact on DPS's mission to provide all students the opportunity to achieve the knowledge and skills necessary to become contributing citizens in our society;
10. Understanding of the value of the compensation package as a whole, not just as it relates to ProComp;
11. Through ProComp and other means, meaningful ways to appreciate, celebrate, and champion teachers that are significant to teachers.

*Range of Illustrative Quotes/ Phrases*

- “Pay for good work and advanced learning, be consistent and fair, and have more stability with extra bonuses for those who are willing to work for it.”
- “We need a livable wage to live in Denver.”
- “Quite simply, I would like a basic cost of living increase every year, but then something that would reward me for becoming a better teacher.”
- “No more pins!”
- “Professionals should be honored by proper compensation for showing growth, for good performance, for student outcomes (based on socioeconomic demographic of the school), yearly base-building that is comparable to any other position. Bonuses should be given. Good, low-cost health care plans should be offered (not the current plans offered by DPS). The compensation system should be simple to understand and predictable. There should be a place employees can go to clearly see the compensation track. There should never be maxing out!”

**Finding 17.** Participants want an agreement to be reached and appreciate that tax payers invested in teacher compensation. They want to keep the money as a vital part of compensation. The flip side of this is they do not want that money to be used to repackage their baseline salary—their perception is that ProComp should serve as bonuses and incentives above and beyond a reasonably competitive base pay.

*Range of Illustrative Quotes/ Phrases*

- “I am glad tax payers invested in teachers this way.”
- “I don't know if how ProComp is running is how tax payers intended it to run.”
- “The District and DCTA need to reach an agreement.”

**Finding 18.** Career progression matters to participants, in the classroom and throughout their careers. There was openness to the way this is achieved as long as the system is fair, it's clear how to progress in the system with meaningful opportunities to increase base pay beyond year 14, if it values professional development, recognizes experience and hard work, and allows for staying in the classroom.



#### *Range of Illustrative Quotes/ Phrases*

- “Teacher leadership positions are great, but the expectations of these positions need to be realistic. As of now, teaching half-time team lead roles is unrealistic. There are too many responsibilities. I usually work 13-14 hour days, but am not being compensated appropriately.”
- “There is absolutely NO value being put on teachers who choose to stay in the classroom.”
- “ProComp should retain and value career classroom teachers – we don’t want to move out of classroom!”
- “I don’t think salary increases should necessarily be on years.”
- “When I max out my earning potential for base pay it is so demotivating for continued development.”
- “I am interested in modified step and lane.”
- “Career pathways could work, devil is in the details.”

**Finding 19.** Recognizing and encouraging continued education and growth by teachers is a core value for participants. Almost 100% of teachers supported continuing to recognize through compensation the achievement of advanced degrees (including loan payoff) and to incentivize ongoing professional development. This was expressed as a core value—as educators, the system should value continuing education.

- There were varying view points on whether all advanced degrees or only those specific to class-room teaching should be rewarded, and if the system should shift to reward stricter certification—like National Teachers Certification.
- There was agreement that the Professional Development Unit (PDU) system is somewhat broken—that offerings are not equally accessible, quality is variable, and offerings are insular to the District as opposed to allowing for outside trainings and PD credit. A lot of the value of PDUs in ProComp came from the base-building element, that all teachers could choose to complete the PDU requirement and that it was predictable.

The bottom line is, that while participants were open to evidence-based decision-making to tweak what is incentivized in knowledge and skill development, participants felt strongly that the system must recognize and reward advanced and continuing education precisely because they are operating in an educational system. Students are looking at teachers as role models of what’s possible.

#### *Range of Illustrative Quotes/ Phrases*

- “Teachers need to be able to pursue and get credit for courses outside of the District”
- “I know how to earn my PDU incentive.”
- “The District would look silly if we didn’t value through compensation investments, continued education. It’s core to what we do.”

- “We are role models for kids.”
- “PDUs are important, but system is kind of a mess.”
- “Maybe a standard certification should be selected and rewarded, like the National Teacher Certification.”
- “I am not sure about what advanced degrees should count—maybe just ones that directly apply to the classroom.”

**Finding 20.** Testing may present a perverse outcome in ProComp. For the incentives that are calculated in part on student test scores, a portion of teachers identified that sometimes they or others can end up resenting their students for opting out of testing, or for underperforming, because it impacts their pay or school performance, and because the children are not motivated by the testing as the results do not have significance to them.

*Range of Illustrative Quotes/ Phrases*

- An example shared was when a teacher noted she had a student arrive from Mexico, and two weeks later the student had to take PARCC testing. There was no chance that the child would do well, and she felt torn and guilty that she resented that the child would bring classroom scores down.
- “ProComp can make you resent students for bringing your chance of compensation down.”

**Finding 21.** ProComp bonus structure is not as meaningful or effective as it could be.

1. Payout timings do not reinforce when the incentive was earned, disconnecting the effort from the receipt of the money.
2. If a teacher changes schools he/she doesn’t receive some of what was earned at the previous location, which was described as an issue of fairness.
3. Teachers report that the amount of work for the size of the bonus is mismatched for both PDUs and SLOs, and that both of these areas can be manipulated to receive the bonus.
4. Participants reported that teaching at schools which consistently receive both high growth and high performance expect it as salary, and don’t view it as a motivating factor that they could lose.
5. Participants conveyed that the incentive to move to a high needs schools is not substantial enough to motivate a shift, and not set up to retain teachers over time.
6. And as previously noted, some teachers pointed out incentive designs are muddled—like the ability to earn at a high performing, high growth school in a hard-to-staff assignment is much greater than working at a high needs school, and it appears there are few opportunities to earn at a yellow school. This serves as a disincentive to seek employment at such a school, reinforcing the status quo.

*Range of Illustrative Quotes/ Phrases*

- “Changes in ProComp system should not impact the money earned in the previous year. You should get paid based on what the rules of the game were at that time.”

- “PDUs and SLOs are a lot of work for the money. Also the value on student growth and effectiveness is very low.”
- [Other quotes previously shared support some of these insights.]

**Finding 22.** Participants report feeling sandwiched between competing pressures, which serves to devalue their current compensation. Many participants reported that in recent years they’ve experienced increased demands and expectations from external voices for student achievement requiring additional work load and teaching to tests, while labeling teachers as the “scape goat.” In the meantime, they report trying to champion and develop each child as a whole person (social/emotional as well as academic) and maintain a connection to love of learning for students (and love of teaching for themselves). Teachers want to see that their voices are valuable and heard in determining the systems that best support outcomes for students. The additional and less enjoyable time spent on activities that teachers do not perceive as providing a direct benefit to students or themselves diminishes the value of existing compensation, and demotivates the workforce.

*Range of Illustrative Quotes/ Phrases*

- “DPS will lose amazing teachers if we do not feel valued.”
- “The expectations for teachers continue to grow with adequate compensation or resources!”
- “Teachers are leaving in droves, and new teachers are not staying long because of the illogical and unfair manner in which the testing is administered and used to judge teachers.”
- “I love the district and my school, have witnessed and been blessed to part of some truly amazing and incredible things, but have also seen some pretty sad and shady things happen as well. I love being a teacher, but when my niece told me she wanted to be a teacher, I secretly told my sister that was worried for her because of all the pressure on classroom teachers these days and that fact breaks my hear because she would be simply awesome for kids

**Finding 23.** Participants have lost some faith in both the District and DCTA through the ProComp process. Participants reported that the communication between sides had become more about winning than on what was best for students, and the teachers who serve them. They are looking for clear, transparent communications that keep the mission and values of the DPS salient. In addition, trust has eroded at significant levels (some teachers cited the 2008 negotiation, others were more general “the last few years”) but the process of changing systems or building new systems that impact teachers will likely be undermined by current trust levels. Participants were no longer assuming “best intentions.”

*Range of Illustrative Quotes/ Phrases:*

- “It seems like both sides are trying to win.”
- “I don’t see what’s good for kids in ProComp negotiations.”

- “It feels like the District is intentionally not being transparent about ProComp.”
- “I can’t see the mission in all of this.”
- “The goals of DCTA and the District are clear as mud. What are we trying to accomplish?”
- “The sides—DCTA and Admin—seem very extreme.”
- “Don’t know who to trust.”
- “I have to read between the lines.”

**Finding 24.** The vast majority of participants were ok with differentiated pay, as long as the factors determining pay were perceived as fair and access to the incentives equitable for all teachers. A small subset of participants expressed that all teachers are doing their best and should receive equal pay. However, the majority supported differentiated pay, but expressed concerns around areas perceived to be unfair—including subjective evaluations, shifting calculations that led to lower payouts than anticipated, limitations to base-building, access of all teachers to bonuses, and the structure of school-based incentives.

*Range of Illustrative Quotes/ Phrases:*

- “I believe that everyone should have opportunity to receive the same incentives.”
- “All teachers and SSPs should be in the same system.”
- “I believe teachers should receive incentives for choosing to teach at underserved schools.”
- “Some teachers should receive more incentives through ProComp than others based on fair criteria. All teachers/ SSPs should have equitable ways to increase earnings.”
- “Yes, if they try to improve their education through advanced degrees and professional development.”
- “Only teachers who are effective should have access to incentives.”
- “Reward the teachers that have not left DPS—they are the teachers that care about kids. We could teach elsewhere with less stress.”
- “Need a fair way to measure/determine.”
- “Hard to serve and hard to staff-- Based on more than free and reduced lunch.”
- “Absolutely! We have to reward the best and retain the best.”
- “While our students are our primary motivation, ProComp helps motivate us when we go above and beyond our contracted time, putting in extra hours to meet the needs of our students. If teachers are putting in extra time and effort and are more effective, they should be compensated for that.”

## Findings by Discussion Question

The following breakdown provides insight into the most frequently heard responses given by participants, based on question and flow of the focus groups and school-based discussions and elicited through review of focus group notes.

### **1. Why was it important for you to come today?**

- I want to make sure my voice, and voices of teachers/SSPs not in the room are heard
  - [This response was especially strong if unique perspective (SSPs, Special Ed) or if a lot to lose/gain (top performing, highest needs)]
- I want to learn more about ProComp
- ProComp is totally confusing—how does it work for me, how does it work for other teachers
- LEAP connecting to ProComp, tied to salary not good, a lot of tension and conflict around this, like it as growth not performance, good for weeding out bottom
- I want base-building over time
- Are they going to ever reopen ProComp?

### **2. What is your perception of ProComp? From your perspective, what is the system designed to achieve?**

- [Ambivalent to negative, a few pockets of positive (appeared to be most likely when school-wide and individual incentives being maximized)]
- In general, \$25 million is nice to have—wouldn't want to give it back
- Appreciate tax payers support, that it was acknowledged as something worth investing in
- Overly-complicated, clarity around purpose of system-- perceived purpose doesn't align with execution (payments come the next year, shifting sands of how one qualifies of each incentive)
- In general, people like idea in theory, but think it is poorly executed.

### **3. Does the ProComp system seem fair, why or why not?**

- Concerns were expressed around shifting calculations of incentive awards and how to qualify and when payment will be received; not predictable, questions about why changes were made.
- Lack of clarity of, transparency around, and support for the system perceived as a fairness issue in some respects—how to use, what is in the miscellaneous line item on pay stubs, how do I know if something is missing or a mistake has been made.
- Accessibility to incentives—no issues around teachers receiving different amounts, but issues around ability to have access to incentives (some incentives are only eligible to certain types of teachers).

***Do you believe some teachers in DPS should receive more incentives through ProComp than others? If yes, under what circumstances? If no, why not?***

- Perspective-dependent:

- Taking money away not fair from schools who have “earned” and are being rewarded;
- Adding money to Hard-to-Serve schools is fair as incentives to attract and retain;
- Effectiveness hard to measure, variable;
- Structurally not accessible to all—number of students, testing, etc.—unfair
- INCENTIVE needs to be clarified from BONUS (individual incentive example).
- Ok with differences IF crystal clear on how to engage with the system, structurally available to all, trust in measures, measures are predictable and consistent;
- Unintended consequences possible, including:
  - Teachers start to just check the box of playing ProComp system and lose some of the other motivators important to their work;
  - 14 years issue--- draining experience from the District;
  - Paying out money a year later, undermines system;
  - Not paying at all for money earned previous year due to early retirement, changing schools or districts has huge negative / trust issue;
  - Lack of communication, knowledge about and technical support has eroded this system;
  - New teachers who are pro-reform become somewhat jaded within 4-5 years ;
  - Teachers see school-wide incentives as expected parts of their salary or see ProComp as taking a portion of what their salary should be and repackaging it as an incentive (jumping through hoops for the money, getting paid less base salary than other districts).

**4. What are the factors most important to you in motivating and energizing you?  
Where does ProComp contribute to supporting or hindering those factors?**

- The students;
- Denver/ urban school district—serving this particular school district;
- Leadership at the school;
- Teachers/ supportiveness/ culture;
- Fair compensation at a baseline level;
- Feeling voice matters in discussion on what’s best for kids;
- ProComp not that important for motivating action or behavior change;
- Valuing / recognition for hard work, going above and beyond (not just pins for every 5 years)—great to hear when doing something well, would like to see more mechanisms around this; money does matter here;
- How can I stay in the classroom, and build skills, develop and lead in the classroom;

- Career pathways—continuing to progress, grow, increase earnings—if fairly designed.

**5. In the design of a compensation system that works for you, what are your primary compensation goals?**

- Predictability, every month, every year, and over time—duration of a career;
- Cost of Living addressed (housing a critical issue—can’t live where they work because housing is not affordable) and reasonable wages to support a family over time (basic needs met, good quality of life);
- Know what they are getting paid for, “misc. line item” on paystub a real negative;
- Consistency in System Design: Tired of underlying change; “innovated to death”;
- Transparency: Constant change and chaos in the system—erodes ability to connect actions to outcomes, hard to use as a tool to motivate teachers consistently;
- Simplicity: Perception of working harder for essentially the same money, with more hoops to jump through;
- Differentiate between Rewards and Incentives—these feel really different, and trading off between them feels demotivating;
- Measures of hard work should matter, too (if measure of effectiveness variable and not fail proof, then also reward those going above and beyond—taking on additional roles);
- Tap into and celebrate progress against odds, celebrate community, kids, each other.

***What are specific way the system could be designed to support these goals?***

- Make the difference between incentive and bonuses clear; currently they are wrapped up in the same incentive category;
- Base-building structure really clear, meaningful;
- Bonuses taxed as a higher level, so how address this in structure?;
- Pay stub—transparency and communication;
- “Modern” steps and Lanes plus incentive or bonus; Career pathways that show clear progression;
- Measure basic effectiveness; support first, then weed out deadwood; use LEAP for Growth;
- Want to be teacher leaders that stay in the classroom for significant portions of time—don’t want to have to leave to progress.

***What is ProComp doing well in its current design that should be kept?***

- School-wide and individual;
- That extra money exists to be spent in this way, so the program should continue—don’t let the money go;

- Basic values in system are good (knowledge increase and continual improvement, leadership, effectiveness, collaboration at school level, incentivize hard to teach/ hard to staff).

**6. What are your views on ProComp's connecting to LEAP? What works about this? What are your concerns?**

- Idea of measuring effectiveness good, LEAP values good;
- Never been a system to truly understand what makes for an effective teacher across the US, so tough to tie to compensation in a meaningful way;
- LEAP good for weeding out the dead wood;
- Too variable to tie to ProComp at this point, if ever;
- Good as growth model, but when tied to compensation everyone becomes much more combative/ competitive;
- Recognition among teachers that distinguished very hard to achieve—so most likely to support any additional merit bonuses for this group and this group only; effective/ approaching not a good enough distinction—not enough faith in the system;
- If any part of LEAP tied to ProComp would want to see a pilot;
- Some recommendations to give ProComp money directly to schools and then teachers/principal work together to decide best way to spend money as rewards for school and teacher milestones.
- 

**7. Which is better for you—being rewarded for outcomes/performance or being rewarded for continuing education like advanced degrees and PDUs? Why?**

- Don't feel there are good measures of outcomes / performance and yet all recognize this is important—SGOs trying to get at this but can be gamed;
- SGO Incentive feels paltry for amount of work put in;
- PDUs good for predictability, but very variable in quality and exist in a closed system (don't get outside perspectives, exposure the same way);
- In general, value education—and think district should too—sets good role model for students, supports continuous improvements;
- Advanced degrees valuable—most valuable if relevant to classroom, subject matter;
- National Teacher Certification—valued, affordable, could be a good thing to incentivize more formally;
- What do you actually want to teachers to learn and then pay for it... this isn't clear and communicated (Spanish language example).



**8. If you could suggest a single change to ProComp in this next version what would it be?**

- Simplicity;
- Base-building;
- Execution and support;
- Clarity of intention—directly tie to mission;
- ProComp should support and live DPS values, not undermine;
- Maintain existing bonuses, add more to Hard-to-Serve—don't pendulum swing—as there are unintended consequences.

### Teacher/SSP Grouping-Specific Findings

The following chart details variations to general findings by specific grouping. Pulling these items out was more art than science, meaning school and focus group discussions often consisted of a wide-variety of teacher groupings (i.e., even if a focus group was comprised by school rating, the voices of experienced teachers or some other teacher attribute may have been more salient to the insights shared at the time), so facilitators had to listen closely for similarities expressed among specific voices across school and focus groupings, and connect these insights back to who participated in each group. This was done by analyzing immediately after a group occurred, and loosely tying back insights to the group makeup (during introductions each member shared some level of background relating to role and experience which was recorded in flip chart).

Voices Heard	Engagement Strategy	Specific Findings to this Grouping
Newer teachers (1-3 years)	Focus group, voices from school visits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Significant confusion about system; orientation to and support of system inadequate</li><li>• Like concept of ProComp</li><li>• LEAP as growth model</li><li>• Concern about losing experienced teachers as mentors</li><li>• Value effectiveness</li><li>• Difference between bonuses and incentives matters</li><li>• Values not necessarily aligning with practice</li><li>• Influenced by peer voices if factual information absent</li></ul>
Mid-Career Teachers (4-9 years)	Focus Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Base-building concerns</li><li>• ProComp clarity</li></ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hard-to-Serve; red schools – reward tenure at school</li> <li>• Stressed importance of continuity of teachers</li> <li>• Increased jadedness about ProComp</li> <li>• Value effectiveness, concerns about how to measure</li> </ul>
Experienced teachers (10 years +)	Focus Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feel undervalued</li> <li>• Perceive they are being run out intentionally</li> <li>• Stay for love of kids, school environment, pension</li> <li>• Trust levels low</li> <li>• Jaded about ProComp, original promise vs reality</li> <li>• More meaningful ways to acknowledge service and accomplishments in District</li> </ul>
Teachers in Different Categories of Leap	Three in-person focus groups, broken out by LEAP grouping	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Approaching <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Valued measures of effectiveness</li> <li>• Principal ratings of concern</li> <li>• Variation between years of LEAP which undermined trust in system</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Effective <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Were more positive about ProComp overall</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Distinguished <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mixed messages about whether should be rewarded vs. recognized more; pride in job</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
Early Childhood Educators and kindergarten through first grade	Focus Group: ECE, Kindergarten and First Grade School Visit: Stephen Knight Center for Early Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concerns about how structurally excluded from some ProComp incentives</li> <li>• Use ECE methods of determining effectiveness/ growth</li> <li>• Concerns with connecting to LEAP as is—more arbitrary system for ECE</li> </ul>
Teachers in High Growth Schools	School visit(s): Asbury, East, Denison, Hill, North	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Real concerns about taking bonus away to fund Hard-to-Serve/staff incentives</li> <li>• Demoralizing to think could move backwards on salary schedule</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bonus sometimes so predictable they view it as salary in some environments</li> </ul>
Teacher Leaders	Focus Group, Interviews, School Visits: McGlone, Gust, North	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In general, extra pay for extra work</li> <li>• Not a ton of awareness about how peers sometimes view their roles</li> <li>• Other teachers want selection process to be transparent, vetted, certain level of experience, metrics for success</li> <li>• <i>This would be a place for additional exploration</i></li> </ul>
Specialized Service Providers	Focus group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellent participation</li> <li>• Appreciated opportunity to share perspectives</li> <li>• System not designed well for their roles; structurally excluded or more arbitrary</li> </ul>
ELA teachers	In-person focus group; School Visit: Trevista	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mixed opinions on whether / how to reward ELA efforts since mandated by law</li> <li>• Cited immense work—and distinctions between different levels of certification—would be good to pay for extra time expended</li> </ul>
Special Education Teachers  mild moderate   Center Programs	In-person Focus Group, One online focus group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Center programs often reside in green / blue schools but kids come from all over—often “hard to teach”</li> <li>• Hard to staff at elementary level—incentive removed, thoughts were that these roles were still hard-to-staff</li> <li>• Structurally excluded from accessing some portions of ProComp</li> <li>• Need measures of effectiveness tied to students, appropriateness of LEAP</li> </ul>
Peer Observers	Brief Survey or phone-based webinar approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Gathering more insight on peer observers perspectives needed</i></li> <li>• Lots of varied feedback on peer observer roles from other teachers—from wonderful to inexperienced, not-calibrated; bottom-line—a lot of variability in system</li> </ul>
Teachers from Highest Need Schools	School Visits: Trevista, North, Colfax; Math and Science Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current incentives not enough</li> <li>• Need to recruit and retain</li> <li>• Increasing money for length of stay at school</li> </ul>

	Academy; Skinner; Focus Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most teachers recognize difficulty of these environments</li> <li>• Strong opinions that harder to get a good LEAP score when at a red or Hard-to-Serve school, and that they are so tightly scrutinized that it is motivation-killing</li> <li>• More likely to want to shift away from school wide incentives to individual incentives for performance or extra work expended, but then concerned about how to measure</li> </ul>
Teachers from Title I Schools	School visits: Denison, McGlone; In-person/ Online Focus Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concerns about tying ProComp to LEAP; like as growth model</li> <li>• Unclear to them about how title I vs Hard-to-Serve determination in some cases</li> <li>• Students vary, impact ability to teach</li> </ul>
Teachers in Transition	School Visits: Thomas Jefferson, Colfax, Hill, Skinner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lots of concerns about principal's role in determining LEAP scores</li> <li>• Culture/ leadership has significant impact on teacher satisfaction</li> <li>• When teachers work as a tight team to achieve goals—especially high growth in ProComp, seems to acknowledge hard work (real concerns about being taken away)</li> </ul>
Teachers in Innovation Schools	School Visits: Grant, McGlone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More positive about pay-for-performance concepts overall</li> <li>• Critical of structural and admin issues with ProComp</li> <li>• Deeper understanding of various DPS systems (Willing to tie ProComp to LEAP if a pilot)</li> <li>• Should be able to determine how to best use money to motivate—hand over dollars, already collecting data</li> <li>• More team approach in school, school incentives matter somewhat, frustrated that structural barriers of ProComp exist (i.e. contribute to math or literacy through their coursework, but not “testing” teacher</li> </ul>

		so don't get credit for work done
Teachers in High Performing Schools	School Visits: East, Asbury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experienced teachers feel undervalued</li> <li>• Concerns about tying to LEAP</li> <li>• Concerns about having money taken away</li> <li>• Strong school cultures, strong teacher voices</li> <li>• ProComp has become part of their expected salaries—doesn't feel like a bonus or nice-to-have but something deserved / earned</li> <li>• Teachers from high performing schools in focus groups expressed some concern that high growth and high performing coupled tightly—teachers want to get into those schools for “guaranteed money”</li> </ul>
Teachers in Nontraditional Models	School Visits: Bruce Randolph, Math and Science Leadership Academy, Denison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More hoops to jump through as nontraditional schools; this means they feel the burden more of adding additional systems (Denison example)</li> <li>• <i>More exploration here might be needed</i></li> </ul>
Teachers without testing	In-person Focus Group; various school visits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frustrated they are structurally excluded from some of ProComp's opportunities, feel they contribute to literacy and math goals—more strong if not qualifying for school-wide performance incentives</li> <li>• Acknowledge additional pressure/ prep of tests—but then falls into “more work” category NOT achievement, and there are lots of things that require more work that don't get paid for</li> </ul>

## Design Principles to Guide 3.0

### Teacher-Driven Design Principles

The following design principles represent a summary process by Mission Spark, in which key themes from teachers were pulled out. These 11 principles represent those concepts that were heard and expressed again and again by a large number of participants. Some of these overlap significantly with those proposed by the Design Team in the Design Team Report, and participants

were asked to reflect on what they liked and didn't like about those principles. Design team principles are presented directly following the list below, and the new list is not meant to supersede the list generated by the Design Team (as both admin and teachers perspectives were taken into account, and a different process followed):

- 1) Achieve simplicity and clarity in the system.
- 2) Provide predictability through clear paths to earnings, as well as provide prompt pay out of incentives.
- 3) Provide equal opportunity to pursue incentives for everyone in system—they can choose to put in the work or not.
- 4) Build in teacher control of compensation destiny—there are clear steps and choices that teachers can make in the system that fall within the participant's influence.
- 5) Achieve consistency in underlying calculations, instead of shifts and changes.
- 6) Provide transparency of how the system impacts compensation (at individual, teacher grouping, school and district levels) .
- 7) Make reasonable cost of living adjustments, especially to address rising costs of housing.
- 8) Provide base-building opportunities throughout one's career, whether through career pathways or modified step and lane.
- 9) Connect ProComp objectives and outcomes through theory and evidence to DPS's mission to provide all students the opportunity to achieve the knowledge and skills necessary to become contributing citizens in society.
- 10) Promote understanding of the value of the compensation package as a whole, not just as it relates to ProComp.
- 11) Provide meaningful ways to value, appreciate and champion teachers.

## Design Team Proposed Design Principles

The following principles are those proposed by the Design Team, in the 2015 Design Team Report. Participants were given a copy of these principles on which to comment as part of the focus group exploration:

- 1) Opportunities for leadership and increased compensation, including base-building opportunities and bonuses, should be available to teachers throughout their entire career.
- 2) The compensation system should be easy for teachers to understand. It should also be easy for administrators to understand and support.
- 3) The compensation system should attract and retain, with real incentives, effective and distinguished teachers in Hard-to-Serve schools.
- 4) The compensation system should allow effective/distinguished teachers to increase earnings substantially without leaving the classroom.

- 5) The compensation system should attract, retain, and reward effective and distinguished teachers.
- 6) The compensation system should value professional learning.
- 7) The compensation system should provide a formal and explicit structure for career progression and opportunities.
- 8) The design team should be sensitive to whether the requirements placed on teachers and school and District leaders are reasonable (including the requirements for advancement and increasing earnings). The District must have systems/practices in place to support the compensation system and support teachers in pursuing available opportunities.

## Sample Decision Making Tool for ProComp 3.0 Negotiators/ Designers

### Strategy Screen

To ensure current and future ProComp negotiations and strategies are designed to take teacher feedback into account, Mission Spark has developed an example of a strategy screen adapted from a tested tool designed by National Social Venture Partners. A tool like this could be used to review core aspects of ProComp during design stages in alignment with core program targets. This tool can also be used to weigh the merits of new and existing strategies. While Mission Spark consultants supplied sample content we believe to be aligned with ProComp's assessment needs, the assessment criteria and weights should be paired back and tailored to fully reflect the criteria and assessments important for teachers, administrators and students.

<b>ProComp Sample Strategy Screen</b>  <u>Is this strategy/element right for ProComp?</u>	<b>Rating:</b> <b>How well the strategy, opportunity or approach performs against the criteria</b>  3 = high/excellent rating 2 = medium/good rating 1 = low/poor rating not applicable or 0 = don't know	<b>Weight :</b> <b>Importance of the criterion to the strategy or element.</b>  3 = High 2 = medium 1 = Low  = Rating x <b>Score</b> Weight
<b>Description of proposed ProComp Element:</b>	<b>ProComp Focus Area:</b>	

Assessment	Rating	Weight	Score	Written Observations
<b>Criteria</b>				
<b>Mission / Vision / Values</b>				
Will this help DPS meet our mission?			0	
Does it align with our core values?			0	
Does the opportunity advance one of our primary goals?			0	
<b>Impact and Demand</b>				
Is this element measurable?			0	
Is this element in demand by teachers?			0	
Is this element tied to student outcomes?			0	
Is innovation a hallmark of this element?			0	
Does this element interact with other elements for an intended positive effect?			0	
<b>Administration</b>				
Is this element easy to support through administration?			0	
Can this element be easily described and communicated?			0	
Can this element be achieved outside of the ProComp framework?			0	
Does the element easily fit within our current infrastructure?			0	
Can we afford this element?			0	
<b>Teacher values</b>				



Does this simplify ProComp?		0	
Does this make ProComp more predictable?		0	
Does this make ProComp more accessible?		0	
Does this build the base of teachers?		0	
Does this limit or eliminate an unintended consequence?		0	
Does this incentivize a teacher to meet an unmet need (incentive)?		0	
Does this reward a teacher for a desired outcome (bonus)?		0	
<b>Human Resources</b>			
Do we have the human resources necessary to execute effectively?		0	
Is there Teacher buy-in/interest in this element?		0	
Can this element be effectively implemented within our current staff capacity?		0	
Do we have access to best practice and data to support this element and do it well?		0	
<b>Risk</b>			
Can we commit to this for a multi-year period?		0	
Are the opportunity costs of pursuing/continuing this acceptable?		0	
<b>Trust / Awareness</b>			
Will we gain trust by our teachers through this element?		0	
Is the exposure/visibility created positive for the ProComp brand?		0	
Do we execute on tax payer intent with this element?			

<b>Total Score</b>		<b>0</b>	
<b>Definitions:</b>  Opportunity cost: What we'll have to give up (forego) in		<b>Matrix Scoring Legend: (based on 30 criteria)</b>	

## Section 3. Bright Ideas and Unintended Consequences

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### Bright Ideas Generated by Participants

The following list presents some of the ideas participants put forth to tangibly improve ProComp. These ideas are presented “as is” – not judged by feasibility or in relation to one another. The intent is that they can be of some assistance to internal design teams. These type of ideas, whether specific to the negotiated agreement or to how ProComp is administered, could be evaluated through a tool like the sample provided above, and vetted through teachers and administrators.

- Breakout the miscellaneous line on paychecks for greater clarity.
- Tie teacher effectiveness to progress measures that matter to students, for example tying ProComp to performance on ACT scores, aligning student and teacher incentives and connecting to college readiness.
- Provide “extra duty” pay as a value of demonstrated hard work.
- Measure teacher effectiveness in relation to other factors related to school environment.
- Pilot giving ProComp funds directly to schools to determine how they might spend the money to best incentivize ProComp goals in their individual environments.
- Make incentives 100% based on individual performance and actions; eliminate school-based incentives.
- Incentivize tenure at a school or in a position, especially hard to teach schools and hard to staff assignments.
- Make reasonable cost of living adjustments for teachers on a regular basis.
- Eliminate individual incentives and focus on school-based collaborative work which focuses of growth objectives specific to that school’s demographics.
- Simplify system down to 2-3 measures.
- Find ways to honor and champion teachers consistently across schools.
- Make every incentive available to all types of teachers.
- Give 100% of ProComp money to red schools.

- Connect teachers to more of what they love about teaching.
- Streamline paperwork required to document PDUs, advanced degrees, SLOs, etc.
- Train and compensate a school-based or regional ProComp expert to answer questions about the system.
- Develop a series of webinars that clearly explain and orient for teachers all of the elements of ProComp, and that can be watched at their own convenience.
- Make sure all schools have access to an incentive, including yellow and orange.
- District work with mortgage companies and banks to educate them on compensation.
- Eliminate the 14 year base-building max.
- Return to step and lane approach to ProComp.
- Pursue modified Step and Lane model with incentives and bonuses.
- Develop career pathways that allow for progression and career development without leaving the classroom.
- Design the system to have fewer tax implications for teachers.
- Expand the possibilities for professional development credits that qualify for the PDU incentive.
- Find ways to value to teacher experience in ways designed by and meaningful to teachers.
- Test teachers, not students, to determine teaching methodology and effectiveness.
- Develop a tool where teachers can track their earnings over time and to explore different choices and combinations of incentives.
- Hold calculations underpinning incentives constant for a set period of time so teachers can make consistent decisions, and are aware when things will be changing.
- If an incentive is earned by a teacher in a school year, they should receive what they earned, even if they leave the school or district.
- Reopen ProComp to allow teachers to opt in to better align incentives as schools.
- Share a variety of real examples and case studies which demonstrate how ProComp works for different types of teachers.
- Align all ProComp materials and communications through the lens of the mission and values of the district.
- Incentivize collaboration between schools to promote increased understanding, empathy and innovation.
- Hire an independent auditor for ProComp who issues a public report on the system each year.
- Only invest in evidence-based elements of ProComp that have proven track records.
- Vet ideas through an advisory board of teachers and administrators not associated with the bargaining process and representative of diverse voices throughout the District.

## Unintended Consequences

Some likely unintended consequences of the design, structure, and administration of ProComp 2.0 were identified in the findings section, and are pulled out here for greater clarity:

1. Significant changes to ProComp in the design of 2.0 eroded some of the trust experienced teachers had for the District; ramifications are still felt today in that experienced teachers who are jaded influence newer teachers with their perspectives and experiences.
2. Green and blue schools often overlap, resulting in significant and substantial school-based bonuses. The dynamics and protective factors at work that help green schools stay green could be explored further; currently a disproportionate amount of ProComp is going to maintaining high performing schools that might have stayed high performing without ProComp. It will be quite difficult to disperse funds away from these schools in a redesign.
3. The amount of incentive for a high needs school teacher is not enough to counterbalance other negative factors in these environments. Additionally, the current structure does not reward tenure.
4. Teachers report seeking ways to game systems that influence their compensation, including SGOs and PDUs. This likely undermines the intended outcomes for which these measures are a proxy.
5. In the absence of clear communication and adequate administrative support, some teachers are concluding the District is intentionally lacking transparency around ProComp, not valuing experienced teachers and encouraging them to leave to avoid paying retirement and higher salaries, and so on. In the absence of fact, perception is king.
6. Changes to underlying systems that impact teacher behavior and ProComp calculations are likely undermining the ability to measure the impact of the system overtime, and teachers abilities to make informed decisions to reach their compensation goals.
7. On a more hypothetical note, significant redistribution of funds from blue and green schools to red may increase equity for student outcomes, by encouraging effective and distinguished teachers to teach in these environments. The question is, will DPS become a district of yellow schools—where reds bump up and greens bump down, and yellows stay the same? Protective factors may prevent this from happening, but it is worth considering in any redesign.

## Section 4. Conclusion & Recommendations

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### Recommendations

Many of the insights shared by participants reinforce findings from previous evaluative efforts (as detailed in the separate ProComp Study Synthesis Report, also prepared by Mission Spark in November 2015). Future explorations need to find ways to ensure new information is additive and actionable as it relates to the redesign of ProComp.

## Future Analyses

Here are four specific recommendations that may add value to the understanding of ProComp:

- (1) The research, findings and teacher engagement to-date does not accurately capture trade-offs between design principles, incentives and other structural elements—or how elements of ProComp compare to other areas of value for teachers like leadership, culture, teaching teams, health benefits, retirement and time off. This is problematic because ProComp represents a finite pool of money, so a redesign will likely lead to winners and losers in some form—what are teachers willing to trade off? This should be explored carefully and more fully.
- (2) Conduct further analysis of available data and metrics through some specific lenses to see if ProComp motivates and rewards teachers differently based on certain attributes or groupings. Some of the differentiated findings in this teacher engagement effort suggest there may be some meaningful differences. In addition, this may provide some insight into how changes may impact winners and losers.
- (3) Explore examples of compensation systems that have made significant changes midstream within a finite budget. What were the lessons learned and what were the ramifications on employee morale, turnover, and moving the needle on desired outcomes.
- (4) Use teachers who have opted out of ProComp as a control group, to determine if their effectiveness ratings and student outcomes differ than like individuals on ProComp. This could serve as a proxy of the effectiveness of ProComp in achieving desired outcomes and motivating teachers overtime.

## ProComp Redesign Efforts

In working on a redesign of ProComp, it might be worth considering some of these ideas:

- (1) Pilot proposed changes to ProComp using pools of money outside of ProComp or by creating an “innovation fund” inside of ProComp. For example, red schools could apply for a pool of money that could be used to attract and retain effective and distinguished teachers to their school, with the ability to pay significantly higher salaries and/or bonuses than are currently allowed through the current structure. If such an effort makes a significant difference in teacher retention and student outcomes, the concept could be rolled out or expanded elsewhere. This could also be done in tying LEAP to ProComp, or in handing over a chunk of ProComp money to an innovation school for teachers there to design their own system and demonstrate results.
- (2) Establish a committee of individuals who have been involved in the evaluation of ProComp since its inception and other compensation experts not associated with the bargaining committees, to propose and explore ideas for the design of 3.0 drawing on their knowledge and insight into the system and its stakeholders.
- (3) Work collaboratively to determine if there are ways to address identified compensation, motivation and progression issues both within and external to the construct of ProComp to allow for more flexibility, resources and integration. Keeping teacher feedback, ideas and

valued design principles salient to ProComp negotiations and any system redesign, and then communicating how those ideas were taken into account, will help teachers see how their voices were heard and why tradeoffs were made. Small efforts in communication and transparency could go a long way to teachers feeling heard.

- (4) Structural barriers exist to realizing the potential and measuring the effectiveness of ProComp in compensating and motivating teachers. ProComp is a single, complex and under-supported part of a much larger puzzle that feeds into teacher motivation and effectiveness. What can be done to honor the design principles that have been identified as important to teachers, which pursuing the outcomes important to student success?
- (5) Pursue a unified strategic plan to support, motivate and compensate teachers through the lens of DPS's mission, vision and values could be an important step, as well as exploring the interactions of multiple and changing systems (i.e., SLOs, LEAP, Differentiated Roles) in influencing intended compensation, effectiveness and retention outcomes.
- (6) Showing and communicating good faith effort to solve the most pressing issues teachers have brought forth, whether through ProComp or other means, along with increasing transparency around the system, communicating through the lens of the mission and vision, and establishing a culture where teachers are seen as valued and collaborative partners, will help restore teacher trust and buy-in.

## Concluding Thoughts

This intent of this report has been to provide both detailed findings from recent ProComp teacher engagement efforts and a pathway back for future decision makers to build on the process, methods, and tools which resulted in the insights of this work. It was an honor and a privilege for Mission Spark consultants to engage DPS teachers and special service providers, and to represent their voices to decision-makers exploring the future of ProComp.

## Acknowledgements

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## Appendices (collected in Dropbox)

Participation Summary

Notes and materials from planning sessions

Engagement Tools

Summaries by School

Summaries by Focus Group

Communication materials

Synthesis of ProComp Studies

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## About Mission Spark & Project Consultants

**Mission Spark** partners with philanthropy, nonprofit and social enterprise leaders to achieve transformative social change and to strengthen the social sector. Mission Spark provides results-driven consulting, training, and facilitation, focusing services on three core areas:

- Strategies for Success
- Strong Leadership & Teams
- Sustainable Organizations

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Kara is Mission Spark's principal consultant and owner. Kara cares about positive and innovative social change and her career and education reflect that passion. She strives to take the best and most practical ideas, lessons and tools from policy, management, community development, social movements, and systems thinking to help strengthen and innovate the social sector. Kara has 17 years of experience as a manager, facilitator and consultant in Colorado and throughout the United States. She's served in senior leadership positions in a variety of organizations and associations, including as founder, director, program manager, chair and board member. She recently co-authored-- Fail Better: Design Smart Mistakes and Succeed Sooner, published by Harvard Business Review Press, November 2014.

Kara received her Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree from MIT Sloan School of Management, with a focus on social sector management and sustainable business. Upon graduation, she was awarded the school's highest honor for leadership, Scholarship and contribution to the community. In addition, she holds a Master of Public Policy (MPP) degree from the Harris School of Public Policy at the University of Chicago, and her Bachelor of Arts in English and Psychology from the Colorado College, where she was a Boettcher Scholar. She received intensive public administration training and consulted to a variety of organizations as a Coro Fellow in Public Affairs, and served as a Thomas J. Watson Fellow in Northern Ireland and Ireland, focusing on the impact of political unrest on youth culture and the development of the arts. Kara is a graduate of the Leadership Denver Class of 2015. Kara's full bio can be viewed at <http://www.missionspark.org/team/kara/>.



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In 2007, Summer was listed in Washingtonian magazine as one of the "40 People Under 40 to Watch." Summer moved to Colorado in 2012 where she served as the state director of Colorado for Share Our Strength, and went on to found SHG Advisors where she currently serves a variety of social impact clients. Summer is a graduate of the Leadership Denver class of 2015. Summer's full bio can be viewed at <http://shgadvisors.com/who-we-are/leadership/>.

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